

Heron Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115749
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	379139
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2012
Lead inspector	Jill Bavin

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Owen
Headteacher	John Coles
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jill Bavin	Additional inspector
George Long	Additional inspector
Sarah Varnom	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 29 lessons taught by 15 teachers. They made several additional visits to classes: four to focus on pupils' use of key skills across the curriculum; five to focus on pupils' independent writing; and nine additional visits to classes or small group sessions focusing on extra help for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Inspectors also met with pupils, staff and members of the governing body, listened to pupils read and examined work in pupils' books. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a variety of documentation related to safeguarding, data about pupils' progress, monitoring and evaluation records, and development plans. Questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 130 parents and carers were analysed during the inspection.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized primary school. There are two classes for each year group and most children join the school in the Reception Year. Most pupils are White British. Far fewer pupils speak English as an additional language than is typical nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs (with a statement or supported by school action plus) is below average.

The school meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils' achievement is improving rapidly, especially in mathematics. This is not yet an outstanding school because teaching is not always good or better. Occasionally, planned activities are not sufficiently interesting and the pace of teaching is a little too slow to accelerate pupils' learning beyond a satisfactory rate.
- Achievement is good. Rates of progress for all groups of pupils, regardless of their starting points, are good and improving. Pupils make good use of key literacy, mathematical and technical skills in other subjects. The school successfully increases the proportion of higher-attaining pupils as they move through the school.
- Teaching is good. Teaching seen during the inspection was mostly good or better and in a third of lessons it was outstanding, which reflects parents' and carers' positive views of teaching. Teachers are particularly good at matching work to the different abilities in the class.
- Pupils maintain an extremely high standard of behaviour in lessons and around school. They express a 'zero tolerance' towards any form of bullying and demonstrate high expectations of themselves and others throughout the school day. Their enthusiasm for learning is apparent in the care they take with their work and their mature approach when working independently of an adult. Attendance rates are high.
- Leaders at all levels share an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. Effective leadership and performance management is increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in the school, although senior staff do not always give teachers feedback that specifies what pupils have learned during their lesson. Staff are ambitious for their pupils and actively contribute to the school's continuing development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that planned activities are consistently interesting and are well paced throughout each lesson
 - giving teachers more precise feedback on pupils' learning in lessons
 - sharing the features of outstanding teaching and learning in school more strategically.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Typically, most children join the Reception class with fewer skills than expected for their age. They make good progress during their first year in school and reach average levels of attainment by the time they join Year 1. The effective development of their interest and skills in reading and writing was exemplified during the inspection. Children demonstrated commendable perseverance to write information about snails or to read as many words as possible in a letter from a recent visitor. While some activities, such as using pre-cut shapes to make 'butterfly masks', limits children's learning, other activities with extremely interesting resources stimulated rapid learning. For example, children made impressive gains in developing imaginative stories, while solving mathematical problems of weight and shape, and exploring their recent learning about animals, when they used nets and ropes attached to trees to represent 'animal cages'.

Boys and girls, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, continue to make good progress. Typically, pupils leave Year 2 with above, and Year 6 with well-above, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a more rapid response to providing targeted support for pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs. As a result, these pupils make good progress. The school's successful focus on improving achievement in mathematics has developed teachers' skills, and so contributed to pupils' good progress both in English and mathematics. This reflects parents' and carers' positive views of their children's progress. During the inspection, pupils made good progress in writing throughout the school because they were given sufficient time to develop their ideas both verbally and on paper, with a clear understanding of the goals they are striving to meet. Most pupils are very confident about the links between letters and sounds by the end of Year 2 and so are well placed to succeed later.

Pupils made good progress in mathematics lessons because teachers' planning reflected close assessment of different pupils' needs. Learning was also enhanced because there were plenty of opportunities for pupils at both key stages to explore their own strategies for problem solving and share these with each other and with their teacher or teaching assistant.

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Quality of teaching

Teaching is typically good for all pupils, including those with disabilities or special educational needs. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning with discreet support that avoids over-direction. The teaching of reading is well structured and systematic. This ensures that books are well matched to pupils' needs. Phonics teaching (the skill of linking sounds and letters) takes place with pupils grouped according to their ability, and continues for as long as a pupil requires. All pupils have good opportunities to apply their phonics skills to both reading and writing throughout the day. Extended periods of time for pupils to develop their writing have a positive impact on achievement. Activities such as writing to 'Mr Wolf' expressing concern about his behaviour regarding small pigs successfully engage pupils' imagination while extending their knowledge of letter writing and skills in writing persuasively. Subject content such as this and, for example, empathetic writing about the plight of Second World War evacuees, enables pupils to reflect on moral behaviour and the experiences of others.

Teachers routinely share success criteria with all pupils, who, therefore, know what they are aiming for and make reasoned evaluations of their own learning. Learning for all pupils is extended through their response to high quality marking. Nevertheless, on occasion, planned activities do not extend learning sufficiently because there are too few opportunities for pupils' active involvement and learning through experience. On these occasions, the pace of the lesson slows. Extremely well-organised teaching is characterised by stimulating, practical activities which extend pupils' skills while deepening their understanding. During the inspection, this was illustrated when pupils worked in small groups to highlight important information within a mathematical 'word problem'. They then selected the correct operation to solve the problem, while also determining the methodology, and selecting the resources they required and recording 'jottings' of their ideas.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All groups of pupils report that they feel extremely safe in school and demonstrate a secure understanding of how to make safe choices. They explain that this is because, while friendships change, this is seldom upsetting and they have a choice of many friends and adults to turn to with any problem. They are entirely confident in adult support. They explain that their 'think books', which are kept throughout their time in school for recording any worries, are empty because they have nothing to enter. There have been no exclusions for several years and pupils report that the worst behaviour they are likely to see in class is people calling out an answer, rather than raising their hand.

They have a mature understanding of different types of bullying, including racist behaviour, physical, verbal, cyber-bullying and bullying through 'messaging'. They value their school because incidents of any type of bullying are extremely rare. All parents and carers who completed questionnaires on line and during the inspection

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agreed that behaviour is good and that their children are very safe in school. The vast majority indicated that learning is seldom disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are routinely polite and courteous around school, including with midday supervisors and cooks. In lessons, they typically demonstrate impressive attitudes to learning. They regularly respond to teachers' marking with sensible written comments and extra work, indicating their willingness to take responsibility for their learning. Previous impressive strengths in their commitment to working collaboratively in pairs or small groups have been sustained.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, governing body and staff share an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities, and also a commitment to continuing development. The governing body contributes effectively to systems for holding safeguarding information and to staff training that exceed requirements. The school has developed particular strengths in its knowledge and understanding of child protection issues.

Previous strengths in promoting equality and tackling discrimination have been enhanced. The school's success in supporting high attendance rates for all groups of pupils has been maintained, and it has strengthened the way teachers meet the needs of all pupils in lessons. As a result, the school has successfully closed previous gaps between girls' and boys' achievement in writing. The school has developed a more accessible and useful system for tracking each pupil's progress. This has contributed to more rapid intervention for those pupils who need particular support. The impact is that achievement is good for all groups of pupils and staff are increasingly held to account. The accurate tracking, rapid interventions and systematic developments demonstrate that the school has strong capacity for further improvement.

Professional development and staff performance management have successfully increased the amount of good and outstanding teaching and learning. Records show that teachers are given clear and helpful feedback on how to improve their teaching. However, attention is not always given to how strengths and weaknesses are having an impact on learning, so some opportunities to fine-tune advice are missed. The school has some exemplary teaching, and senior managers are aware of it and refer to it. However, there is limited strategic analysis of the best elements to share and the best ways to do it.

The curriculum has developed well since the previous inspection. Strengths in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been enhanced through projects such as film-making about faces, similarities and differences, and the provision of quiet spaces outside for reflection. Previous imbalances in the mathematics curriculum have been addressed and the impact on raising pupils' achievement has been rapid, effective and sustained. The use of technology across the curriculum has been enhanced, in particular reflecting the school's focus on mathematics. Evidence from pupils' books and school records indicates that the improvements in curriculum and teaching are set to continue.

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Previous constraints in the curriculum for children in Reception have been addressed with much improved outdoor provision, which has a positive impact on children's learning.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



21 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heron Primary School, Gloucester GL4 4BN

Thank you very much for being so polite and friendly when we visited your school recently. A special thank you goes to those pupils who read to us, spoke with us and shared your ideas and your work with us, and to everyone who completed a questionnaire.

We understand why you and your parents and carers value your school so highly. You attend a good school where teachers meet your needs well and help you to make good progress in mathematics and English. As a result, you reach higher standards than most pupils of your age. You help by attending as well as you do; your attendance rates are much higher than those in most primary schools. You also help by behaving so very well. We were particularly impressed to see how thoughtfully you respond to your teachers' marking of your work. We are also extremely pleased to hear how friendly everyone is, and how very rarely there is any poor behaviour or bullying, which helps you to feel very safe in school.

The governing body, headteacher and staff work well together to keep making your school even better. We have asked them to increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching by:

- ensuring that activities in lessons are always really interesting and help your learning to move on briskly
- making sure that when senior teachers observe lessons they give other teachers clear feedback about how well you have learned
- planning how to share their very best ideas even more thoughtfully.

All of you can help by continuing to attend and behave as brilliantly as you do now. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely
Jill Bavin
Lead inspector

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